

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 202057
ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:IO/SA:EMICHAL

APPROVED BY:IO/SA:EMICHAL

S/S-O: RCASTRODALE

-----022438 100433Z /11

O 100411Z AUG 78 ZFF5

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO RUQMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 4241

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 202057

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT USUN 3150 ACTION SECSTATE DANTED AUG 8, 1978.

QUOTE: S E C R E T USUN NEW YORK 03150

NODIS

DEPARTMENT PASS AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE, AMEMBASSY
DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE, AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE, AND
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MILI, XF, IS, LE

SUBJECT: UNIFIL/IDF MEETING ON SITUATION IN SOUTHERN
LEBANON

1. URQUHART PHONED LEONARD AUGUST 9 AT FIVE P.M. TO
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PROVIDE HIM WITH ACCOUNT OF MEETING THIS MORNING BETWEEN
UNIFIL AND IDF ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.
PARTICIPANTS FOR UNIFIL WERE ERSKINE, CUQ, AND AIME; ON
ISRAELI SIDE EITAN AND BEN GAL. URQUHART WAS QUITE
AGITATED AND CHARACTERIZED THIS DISCUSSION AS THE WORST
YET WITH THE IDF, SETTING BACK CURRENT EFFORTS TO PLACE
LAF BATTALION AT TIBNIN AND MAKING IT CLEAR TO HIM THAT

IDF WAS SABOTAGING EFFORTS OF UNIFIL AND GOL TO TRY TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

2. READING FROM THE CABLE HE HAD RECEIVED FROM ERSKINE, URQUHART DESCRIBED OPENING PRESENTATION BY UNIFIL EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF GETTING LAF BATTALION TO TIBNIN, IN ORDER TO HELP RESTORE AUTHORITY OF GOL THROUGHOUT LEBANON. ALSO STRESSED HIGH IMPORTANCE OF ISRAELIS GETTING CHRISTIAN MILITIA TO STOP SHOOTING ON UNIFIL AND LAF.

3. EITAN REPLIED THAT IT WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR THE LEBANESE BATTALION TO PASS THROUGH CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE ENROUTE TO TIBNIN. THE IDF COULD NOT GUARANTEE THE BEHAVIOR OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA, WHICH WOULD REGARD THE TRANSIT OF THE BATTALION AS PROVOCATIVE. EITAN CHARACTERIZED THE COMPOSITION OF THE BATTALION AS PREDOMINATELY MUSLIM (URQUHART SAID THIS WAS NOT THE CASE) AND ALSO REFERRED TO RECENT MARONITE/MUSLIM INCIDENTS IN THE NORTH AS REASONS WHY MILITIA WOULD CHALLENGE LAF TRANSIT.

4. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, EITAN THEN SAID THAT IT WAS NO USE TALKING ABOUT LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY SINCE LEBANON HAS ALREADY CEASED TO EXIST. THE IDF, HE SAID, WOULD NOT HESITATE IN CHOOSING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND THE LEBAN-
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ESE ARMY. IN CONCLUSION, EITAN SAID THE SYMBOLIC PRESENCE OF AN LAF BATTALION AT TIBNIN MIGHT HELP, PROVIDED IT GOT THERE THROUGH SOME OTHER ROUTE. BUT THE IDF COULD NOT HELP TO ASSURE THIS OUTCOME NOR ASSURE THEIR SAFETY IF THEY GOT THERE. EITAN SAID CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THERE IS A "HOLY WAR" UNDER WAY IN LEBANON BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS AND ISRAELIS CANNOT DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS ADAMANT ATTITUDE.

5. URQUHART SAID THAT ERSKINE WILL PROVIDE AN ACCOUNT OF THIS MEETING TO AHOURY IN BEIRUT ON AUGUST 10. HE CONTEMPLATED, BUT THEN REJECTED, IDEA OF ASKING ERSKINE TO WATER-DOWN HIS PRESENTATION TO KHOURY. ALSO DECIDED THERE WAS NO USE IN SPEAKING TO ACTING ISRAELI UN DEP PERM REP.

6. URQUHART AND WE BELIEVE IT IS LIKELY THAT ONCE GOL RECEIVES THIS ACCOUNT, IT WILL COME TO CONCLUSION THAT ISRAELIS ARE DETERMINED TO FORCE THE BATTALION TO RETURN NORTH. THIS CLEARLY WOULD BE A GRAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SETBACK FOR SARKIS. WE BELIEVE IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT GOL MAY ASK FOR URGENT MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH WOULD THEN BE HEAVILY ANTI-ISRAELI IN ITS FOCUS. TUENI

INDICATED IN CONVERSATION WITH LEONARD YESTERDAY THAT
BOUTROS HAS BEEN CONSIDERING SERIOUSLY THE POSSIBILITY
OF CALLING FOR A SC MEETING RATHER THAN LOOKING ON IT AS
A USEFUL THREAT WHICH COULD ACHIEVE NOTHING IF ACTUALLY
CARRIED OUT. YOUNG UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, CAT-B, MEETING REPORTS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES, POLITICAL SITUATION, MEETINGS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE202057
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IO/SA:EMICHAL
Enclosure: REPEAT USUN NEW YORK 3150
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: N780006-0700
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780877/aaaacmrb.tel
Line Count: 121
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3ec45b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1777416
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNIFIL/IDF MEETING ON SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON
TAGS: MARR, MILI, XF, IS, LE, UNIFIL
To: BEIRUT DAMASCUS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3ec45b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014